

# RIDER'S GUIDE



**LCC** Lake County  
**Connection**  
*Public Transportation*



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# OVERVIEW

This guide is designed to help riders understand Lake County Connection, a paratransit service.

Paratransit is a passenger transportation service primarily intended for mobility-impaired, mentally-impaired and senior citizens. This service is provided for individuals who do not have access to any other means of transportation, including public bus service. It is also provided to those who do not receive services from a sponsoring organization.

In this guide, riders will find a wealth of information regarding policies and procedures that are pertinent to making a trip as convenient and hassle-free as possible. This guide is also available on audio cassette and may be obtained through any Lake County Connection driver.

The Lake County Board of County Commissioners contracted with MV Transportation Inc. to provide paratransit transportation services. MV Transportation operates under the name of Lake County Connection.

The program provides transportation service for eligible individuals through several funding programs, including

the Florida Department of Transportation, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Medicaid, Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged and Elder Affairs.

Lake County Connection provides more than 750 scheduled passenger trips per day, using a variety of vehicles specially equipped to transport individuals with various disabilities. Because the demand for these special transit services is high, it is very important that each customer carefully follow the guidelines in this booklet.

Cooperation and flexibility from riders will allow Lake County Connection to serve its customers better.

## CUSTOMER CALL CENTER

MV Transportation staffs the Lake County Connection Customer Call Center, which takes all reservation requests and customer service calls. It also performs scheduling and dispatching of all scheduled trips.

To contact the Customer Call Center, call (352) 326-2278 [*Florida Relay voice: (800) 955-5770; TTY: (800) 955-8771*]. Reservations can be made Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For Medicaid service after hours, such as late hospital discharges, call (352) 988-8525. For all other emergencies, dial 911.

When calling the Customer Call Center, choose from one of the following options or simply remain on the line and the call will be answered in the order in which it was received by the next available customer service representative.

- Press "3": Speak with a dispatcher to schedule, confirm or cancel a trip (*The best time to make a trip reservation or travel is between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.*)
- Press "105": Speak with the Operations Manager
- Press "109": Speak with the Maintenance Manager
- Press "106": Speak with the General Manager

All other public comments about the Lake County Connection service should be reported to the Lake County Department of Community Services, Transportation Disadvantaged Division, at (352) 742-6580.

After contacting the Transportation Disadvantaged Division, public comments about the service may also be filed with the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged at (800) 983-2435.

## ELIGIBILITY & OPERATIONS HOURS

Individuals who are interested in using the transportation services of Lake County Connection must apply through a written application process. To receive an application, call (352) 326-2278.

Lake County Connection is responsible for determining eligibility for paratransit service. Applications are individually evaluated and eligibility will be decided based on functional ability to use the fixed route (*regular bus service*) system. Transportation services are provided under various programs. Program eligibility is based on evaluation of the application and may include a Functional Assessment test. Eligibility is not automatic.

Lake County Connection services are available Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The only transportation service provided on Saturday is for dialysis treatment. No service is provided on the following observed holidays\*:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Memorial Day



- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

*\*Other holidays may be observed if approved by the Board of County Commissioners.*

## MAKING A RESERVATION

Since Lake County Connection is a limited ride program, reservations are taken on a first-come, first-serve basis. Customers need to make reservations at least 48 hours prior to the date service is needed. Trips are prioritized based on the following needs:

- Critical care
- Other medical
- Employment
- Education
- Other

To make a reservation, call the Customer Call Center at (352) 326-2278.

- Customers may schedule trips from 2 to 14 days in advance.
- Customers may schedule up to three round trips with one phone call.
- Customers will be limited to no more than three round trips in a given day.
- There is a minimum one hour stay for all appointments.

When making a reservation, have the following customer information ready:

- Name
- Home address
- Whether the customer uses a wheelchair or other personal mobility device
- Telephone number
- Birth date (*An adult must accompany any child under age 15*)
- Whether there are any other special considerations for the customer to travel
- Whether customer has a service animal
- Date transportation is needed
- The time of the appointment or time the customer needs to be at the destination
- The time the customer will need to be picked up for the return trip
- Destination address, zip code and telephone number
- General purpose of the appointment

- Any additional people or service animals traveling with the customer (*A companion is an individual who travels with a passenger but not in a caretaking mode. Escorts will not be charged a fare.*)
- Drop-off and pick-up location
  - » When making a reservation, give staff detailed information about the location. However, at larger facilities, such as hospitals, staff may tell a customer to wait in a common pick-up area that has been prearranged with the facility.

A “standing request” is for customers who travel to the same place at the same time on the same day(s) of the week.

If a customer has a regular appointment that he or she needs to go to, the customer may want to ask the reservations staff to submit a standing request for service.

Depending on the funding source of the trip, this request may be granted. Please remember a customer cannot change a standing request more than once per month, or this privilege may be revoked. However, Lake County Connection does realize personal circumstances may occur. Please notify Lake County Connection immediately so this service can better assist everyone.

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If a customer has a standing request and will not be using it for one or multiple days, please contact Lake County Connection to cancel or suspend services to avoid having “no shows” recorded in a file.

Lake County Connection relies on the cooperation of all its customers to make the system run smoothly. If a customer must cancel a reservation, it is imperative to inform the Lake County Connection Customer Call Center at (352) 326-2278. Notify the call center at least two hours before the scheduled pick-up time.

Because so many people rely on this service, changes in the scheduled return time are strictly limited. If a customer is ready to return more than two hours earlier than originally scheduled, he or she may call and ask for an earlier pick-up. Lake County Connection will do all it can to assist in these instances, but is unable to guarantee it will be able to honor the request.

For any emergency situation, call 911. Lake County Connection cannot provide same-day service or assume liability if a customer is in a distress situation.

## ESTIMATED PICK-UP TIMES

Reservations staff will give a customer two estimated pick-up times for all round trips. The first estimated pick-up time will be from the customer's home to the destination. The second estimated pick up time will be the return time from customer's destination back home.

Each pick up time is the start of a one-hour window. A customer should expect the driver to arrive within the one-hour window. A customer will need to be ready to travel at any time within this window. Schedules are developed to allow passengers to get to destinations when they are picked up within the window.

Pick up times may be negotiated with riders to allow more efficient scheduling. Pick-up window adjustments of up to one hour may be required. Each estimated pick up time includes:

- The one hour window
- Additional time for the trip distance
- Additional time for peak periods (rush hour)
- Additional time for other passengers scheduled on the vehicle

- Additional “negotiated” time of up to one hour if necessary

The first pick-up window is based on customer’s appointment time at the destination. The second pick-up window is based on the customer’s requested return time. Multi-legged trips will be treated as round trips with multiple return (*second, third, etc.*) windows based on requested return times.

It can be frustrating if a vehicle is late for a scheduled appointment. Please wait at least one hour past the scheduled pick-up time before calling the Lake County Connection Customer Call Center.

The driver may arrive up to one hour after the scheduled pick-up time and still be considered on time as long as the customer arrives at the destination on time. Please remember the pick-up time is based on factors such as the time the customer needs to be at the destination, traffic delays, inclement weather and multi-loading of other customers.

## FARES

The driver will collect fares from customers when they board the vehicle. The reservations staff will remind each customer the amount of the fare, if any, which will vary by the agency sponsoring the trip.

Customers must have exact change, as drivers do not carry money and will not be able to stop to make change. Fares must be paid in advance for each trip. Except under rare circumstances, not having a fare means no ride. Drivers do not accept tips. Please notify Lake County Connection if any driver asks for or accepts a tip.

The fare for the Lake County Connection service is as follows:

- Within Lake County — \$1 each way
- Orlando — \$5 each way (*This service is provided for medical appointments only on Tuesday and Thursday. Arrives in Orlando at 10 a.m. and departs at 2 p.m.*)
- Gainesville — \$10 each way (*This service is provided for medical appointments only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Arrives in Gainesville at 10 a.m. and departs at 2 p.m.*)



Within Lake County, the fare is \$1 for each one-way trip, unless the customer is:

- Under 21 years of age
- Under approved institutionalized care
- In a maternity related program
- Under a waiver

## NO SHOWS & TARDINESS

Due to the fact Lake County Connection is a shared ride system, it is important each customer is ready to go when the vehicle arrives. Lake County Connection will wait only five minutes because there are other customers either on board or waiting for their scheduled ride. If a vehicle arrives to pick up a customer and he or she is not there or does not get in the vehicle by the scheduled time, the customer will be considered a "No Show."

If a customer places a child or other property on a vehicle and returns to their house and causes the bus to wait longer than five minutes, then the customer's transportation services will be suspended for 10 days.

Multiple no shows will result in a suspension of service. The steps leading up to a suspension of service are:

- First no show recorded in passenger file
- Second no show within 90 days of the first no show will result in a letter to the passenger stating that the next no show will result in a suspension for 30 days
- Third no show within 90 days of the first will result in a 30-day suspension

- Fourth no show within 90 days of the first will result in a 60-day suspension

Customers may appeal this process if they have information that is contrary to that noted above. In addition, if a customer is a no show for the out going trip then their return trip will automatically be cancelled.

The driver will be given the same information a customer supplies to reservation staff. Do not leave the area. If a driver is not able to find a customer within five minutes of arriving, or the customer did not cancel at least two hours before the scheduled pick-up time, the customer will be considered a no show.

## SAFETY TIPS & CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITIES

Lake County Connection provides the following safety tips for customers:

- Wait in a safe, well-lit location
- Choose a pick-up and drop-off location that allows the driver to not lose sight of his vehicle when assisting a customer to or from the door
- Let the vehicle come to a complete stop before approaching
- Allow the driver to assist a customer in boarding the vehicle; ask for special assistance if needed
- Always wear a seat belt

Lake County Connection customers are responsible for the following:

- All personal belongings are the responsibility of the customer
- Customers must load and unload their own belongings (*three-bag limit*)
- Bring a car seat for any children under the age of 5

years old and make sure that it is used properly

- Do not eat, drink or smoke in the vehicle
- Do not use audio or video equipment that may distract the driver's attention
- No disruptive behavior, or risk suspension
- Proper dress is required, including shoes and shirts
- No special requests for specific drivers or vehicles can be honored
- No unscheduled stops will be made

## DRIVERS

Lake County Connection drivers are trained by MV Transportation according to Lake County specifications and guidelines. Drivers must have a safe driving record, pass a criminal background check, pass a Department of Transportation physical and test negative for drugs and alcohol.

Drivers are trained in defensive driving, passenger sensitivity and how to safely transport individuals with special needs. Drivers are selected based on their ability to provide the specialized service needed for the Lake County Connection service.

Drivers are not required to carry the passengers' belongings, assist wheelchairs down more than one step, push wheelchairs through grass or sand or do any lifting of the passenger into or out of a mobility device.

Drivers are expected to:

- Be courteous
- Drive safely
- Wear a seat belt

- Securely tie down wheelchairs
- Lake County Connection photo identification attached to the uniform that can be easily seen by customers
- Be properly uniformed
- Make a good faith effort to find a client (*horn honking to notify a client of arrival is not acceptable*)

Traffic delays, tight schedules, weather conditions, passengers running late and other factors can cause stressful situations that could affect the quality of service for Lake County Connection customers. If a driver or passenger acts in an unreasonable manner (*or contrary to company policies and procedures*) the problem should be reported immediately by calling (352) 742-6580.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### Medicaid Program Guidelines

Applications are individually evaluated per Medicaid criteria. The service area for Lake County Connection Medicaid customers is provided to the closest medical facility able to accommodate a customer's medical needs. If a medical provider refers a customer to another provider not in Lake County, he or she will need to call Eligibility at (352) 326-2278 at least one week prior to the medical appointment. Verification with the referring provider is required before approval can be granted. If Lake County Connection does not hear from the customer's referring provider by 3 p.m. the day prior to the appointment, the customer may be asked to reschedule. Stretcher service is provided by Medicaid, with prior approval.

### Lost Items

If a customer loses a personal item and believes it may be on a Lake County Connection vehicle, call the Customer Service at (352) 326-2278 to report it. If the item is found, the customer may be asked to travel to a central pick-up point to retrieve it. If the item is not located on the vehicle, Lake County Connection or the driver will not be held responsible for replacement.



## Wheelchair Service

The Lake County Connection service is “door-to-door,” unless otherwise noted. When making a reservation, be sure to mention if a customer has difficulties walking, or if he or she uses a mobility device or a wheelchair. Wheelchairs must be provided by the passenger, and a customer must be on the ground floor at the time he or she is to be picked up.

A wheelchair is a mobility aid designed for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered. Lake County Connection vehicles are equipped to transport “common wheelchairs” which do not exceed 30 inches in width and 48 inches in length measured 2 inches above the ground, and do not weigh more than 600 pounds when occupied.

## Service Animals

Lake County Connection will accommodate any service animal trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to: guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruder or sounds, providing

minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or retrieving dropped items.

### **Oxygen Requirement**

Travel with oxygen equipment is permitted, but the equipment must be small enough so that the driver does not have to assist with the loading and unloading of it. The safety and use of this equipment is the sole responsibility of the passenger.





LAKE COUNTY  
FLORIDA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
Transportation Disadvantaged Division

(352) 742-6580